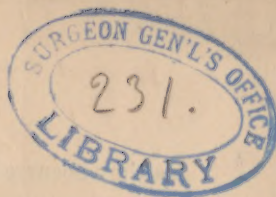


Jenks (Ed. W.)



OPEN LETTER

FROM

DR. EDWARD W. JENKS,

TO

DR. N. S. DAVIS,

Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

*[In regard to controversy with Dr Geo E Ranney
as to performance of an Ovariectomy]*

SIR—Referring to your issue of January 31st last, and to your subsequent private letter to me, in both of which you refuse me space to reply to the scurrilous personal attack made on me by Dr. George E. Ranney, of Lansing, Michigan, and of which your journal was the medium, I beg leave to submit that the grounds on which your refusal is based are exceedingly far-fetched. In order to give them the semblance of reason, it has moreover, been necessary to resort to the invention of stating that I had, previous to Dr. Ranney's report of the case of ovariectomy in dispute, reported the same to the *Medical Age*, although you ingenuously state that "the number of the *Age* containing the report had escaped our (your) observation." Had you taken the trouble to look for that number you would have had your labor for your pains, and would have found yourself without the shadow of an excuse for your most remarkable conduct. The first report of the case made by me to any medical journal was my reply to Dr. Ranney's report in your columns. In that reply, as published, I confined myself strictly to a statement of facts

presented by the author.

as they occurred in connection with the operation, and my relations thereto; one or two slight, but not discourteous, allusions to Dr. Ranney having been carefully eliminated by you in the exercise of your editorial prerogative. I found no fault with you for thus suppressing personal allusions, but I leave you to imagine my feelings on seeing, after such suppression in my case, your admission of Dr. Ranney's letter teeming with personalities of a kind now, fortunately, seldom seen in such medical journals of this country as command the respect of the profession. I cannot say that your course in this matter surprised me. It did not require this additional evidence to convince me that I had fallen under the ban of your displeasure, while your conduct towards me and others when I had the honor of being your colleague on the professorial staff of the Chicago Medical College, left no doubt as to the persistence of your animosity in the case of those who had incurred your disfavor. I had hoped, however, that you would never use the high office, to which you were elected by honorable men, as a medium through which you might exhibit personal ill-will. Supposing, as I did, that the *Journal* was placed in your hands by the American Medical Association as a trust, the possibility of your making it an instrument through which you might vent your personal spleen, never suggested itself to me. Your admission of Dr. Ranney's scurrility adds little honor to your name, while your refusal to allow me space for a reply stands unique as an exhibition of the bitterness of personal animosity.

Notwithstanding the fact that you will not publish it, you may, possibly, do me the honor to read the following rejoinder:

I shall make no attempt at imitating the style of Dr. Ranney's communication to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, of January 31st, neither shall I attempt an analysis of his statements, preferring rather to leave them to such as may have read them, for judgment. I cannot, however, suppress my surprise that he should have requested such a person as he represents me as being, to be present with him at an operation, even in the capacity of an "assistant." It was certainly exceeding kind of

him, who had never, to my knowledge, performed an ovariectomy, to come to Detroit to invite me to "assist" him in removing a tumor of immense size and the history of which indicated grave complications. I regret that I cannot so fully appreciate this mark of his friendship as to permit me to discover nothing unselfish in it. Most emphatically I considered myself engaged by Dr. Ranney to perform the operation for him, and most emphatically I did perform the operation. It never dawned on me that he wished to have more credit than that which he originally requested, in the language quoted in the only communication by me to your journal or, indeed, to any other. After my return to Detroit I mentioned the case in a conversation at a casual meeting with several medical friends, among whom was Dr. Mulheron, the Editor of the *Medical Age*. Dr. Mulheron, on his own responsibility, afterwards made the following editorial note of it in his paper:

"Dr. E. W. Jenks, of this city, assisted by Drs. Ranney and Post, of Lansing, and White [Wright] and Davis, of Grand Ledge, Michigan, removed from a patient, at the latter place, on the 8th inst., an ovarian tumor weighing 95 pounds. This was, probably, the largest tumor ever removed in this State. The case was, furthermore, a remarkable one from the fact that the cyst had ruptured several days prior to the operation, and that there was present in consequence a well-defined peritonitis. The growth was of six years' duration, and the walls of the cyst were so friable that they readily broke under the manipulation necessary to its removal. The contents, which were of a gelatinous nature, were thus fully discharged into the abdominal cavity, and the time required for their complete removal, together with the extensive adhesions of the cyst walls, caused the operation to be prolonged to three hours. The woman is at this writing, sixteen days after the operation, doing well, and is practically convalescent. The case will go upon record as one of the most remarkable which has been encountered, and Dr. Jenks' detailed report of it will be awaited with interest by all practitioners of any experience in this branch of surgery."

Had Dr. Ranney intimated to me his ambition to appear before the profession as an ovariectomist, I should certainly not have stood in his way. Had I, however, suspected his purpose, as appears in the following quotation from his letter to

the *Journal* of January 31st, to saddle me with the responsibility in the case of the patient's death and to claim the credit in the event of her recovery, I hardly think my complacency would have been equal to the occasion: "Now, at this juncture," asks he, "had the patient died, would Dr. Jenks or anyone else have claimed that *he* was the principal in the case? I would not have done so, certainly." The ingenuousness of this admission does him credit, notwithstanding the fact that it stultifies him.

I was fully aware of the fact that the game was hardly worth the candle, but was nevertheless constrained, through the very boldness of its assumption, to reply to his first communication to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. His subsequent communication, I submit, has hardly substantiated his claim to being anything more than an assistant in the case, the certificates which he publishes to the contrary notwithstanding. James E. Taylor says "we certainly did not employ Dr. Jenks to make the operation." Certainly not; it was Dr. Ranney who "employed" me. The others, on whom he relies—Drs. A. J. Wright and W. A. Davis—give very equivocal testimony. They evidently gave it under a strong pressure of personal friendship. It is not strange that they should testify that Dr. Ranney was "the principal in the case." Certainly the case was Dr. Ranney's, and I never attempted to deprive him of it. I simply performed the operation for him, and there my connection ceased, with the exception of such subsequent instruction as I gave him in personal interview and by mail, for the care of it.

Inasmuch as Dr. Ranney has resorted to the device of certificates to bolster up his untenable claim, and has reduced the matter to a question of veracity between him and me, allow me respectfully to submit the following for your consideration. The first refers to his office mate, Dr. Post, the absence of a certificate from whom in Dr. Ranney's communication, is certainly suggestive:

DETROIT, March 2, 1885.

DR. EDWARD W. JENKS, Detroit, Mich.

DEAR SIR:—While in Lansing, Michigan, on the 8th of October, 1884, I made a friendly call upon Dr. Julius A. Post, of that city. He informed me during the course of the conversation that ensued, that he had just returned from Grand Ledge, and was very tired from assisting in a very important operation that had been performed there that day. That the lady operated upon was one of Dr. Ranney's patients, and that Dr. Jenks, of Detroit, assisted by Dr. Ranney, himself and local physicians of Grand Ledge, had removed an ovarian tumor weighing 95 pounds.

Yours very truly,

GEORGE W. CHANDLER,
State Agent Hartford Fire Insurance Company.

GRAND LEDGE, Mich., March 16, 1885.

DR. E. W. JENKS, Detroit, Mich.

DEAR SIR:—Having read Dr. George E. Ranney's report of the operation for the removal of the tumor from Mrs. Taylor, of this place, in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and your reply thereto, I submitted the articles to Dr. Davis, who was present at the operation, and asked him which was the correct report. He authorized me to say that he was present when the operation was performed, and that "Dr. Jenks' report of the case is correct in every respect."

Very truly yours,

E. P. GRISWOLD.

The above letter was subscribed and sworn to before me this 16th day of March, A. D. 1885.

J. L. MCPEEK,
Notary Public.

GRAND LEDGE, Mich., March 31, 1885.

DR. E. W. JENKS,

DEAR SIR:—Dr. W. A. Davis is my family physician, and he, unsolicited, told me all about the operation on Mrs. Taylor, of this place, representing you as the operator, and Dr. Ranney and others as assistants.

MILO CAMPBELL.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, }
COUNTY OF EATON, } ss

Personally appeared before me, Orlando Wheelock, a Notary Public in and for Eaton County, Michigan, Dr. T. M. Armstrong, a resident of Grand Ledge, in said County and State, and being by me first duly sworn according to law, says as follows, to-wit: Dr. Wright, then of said Grand Ledge, with his wife, called on this deponent a few nights after the operation was performed upon Mrs. E. Taylor, in said Grand Ledge, and during the conversation which ensued, among other matters spoken of, Dr. Wright said to this deponent: "Doctor, I am sorry you were not present at the operation on Mrs. Taylor," and further, that Dr. Jenks, of Detroit, performed the same. This deponent then said to Wright that he did not care that he had not been present except for the reason that he was well acquainted with Dr. Jenks, and had seen him perform operations often before, and would have been pleased to have seen him do this operation. Dr. Wright further said to this deponent that Dr. Ranney and the other physicians present assisted Dr. Jenks in making the same, one no more particularly than the other.

And this deponent further deposing, says: after having the above conversation with Dr. Wright, and some days after this, deponent happened to meet Mr. Taylor, the husband of the woman who was operated upon by

Dr. Jenks, of Detroit, and in the course of the conversation with him, this deponent said: "You know, Mr. Taylor, that Dr. Jenks operated upon your wife?" In reply, he (Mr. Taylor) said: "I employed Dr. Ranney and wish him to have the credit."

Further this deponent says not.

(Signed,)

T. M. ARMSTRONG.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this 26th day of February, 1885.

ORLANDO WHEELOCK,

Notary Public.

GRAND LEDGE, March 9th, 1885.

DR. E. W. JENKS, Detroit, Mich.

DEAR DOCTOR:—In Dr. Ranney's pamphlet I see what purports to be a letter from Dr. A. J. Wright, relative to the ovariectomy upon Mrs. Taylor, of this place, Oct. 8, 1884, wherein he expresses surprise at your being credited with the operation. Now, so far as Dr. Wright's statements are concerned, he did say repeatedly that the patient was Dr. Ranney's, but that Dr. Jenks operated; and at the last interview I had with Dr. Wright, after the different reports, and a day or two before he removed from this place, I asked him in regard to the operation, and his answer was as before: "The patient was Ranney's, but Jenks operated."

Yours very truly,

S. S. MESSENGER, M. D.

GRAND LEDGE, Mich., February 24th, 1885.

DR. E. W. JENKS, Detroit, Mich.

DEAR SIR:—A. J. Wright, M. D., who resided for four or five months in this place, repeatedly informed me that "the man from Detroit," (Dr. Jenks) performed the operation of ovariectomy on Mrs. Edwin Taylor. I am not surprised that Dr. Ranney, of Lansing, should attempt to take the credit of performing the said operation and utilize it for advertising purposes.

Yours truly,

C. EDSON COVEY, M. D.

GRAND LEDGE, Mich., March 3rd, 1885.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that about the time of the operation on Mrs. Edwin Taylor, of this place, Dr. A. J. Wright was treating our girl (now dead). And that on the occasion of his visits he spoke freely of the operation, and told us that the doctor from Detroit, (Dr. Jenks) did the job, assisted by the others.

This further certifies that James E. Taylor, a son of the woman operated on for the ovarian tumor, was at our house on the 24th day of October last, and in speaking of the operation on his mother, told us that Dr. Jenks performed it, and that the other physicians present were merely assistants.

(Signed,)

SAMUEL G. WHITNEY.

HARRIET D. WHITNEY.

GRAND LEDGE, April 2, 1885.

E. W. JENKS, M. D.,

DEAR SIR:—In the interest of truth I will say that I have known Mr. and Mrs. Taylor the most of my life. Meeting Mr. Taylor shortly after the operation for ovariectomy on Mrs. Taylor, I asked him the direct question: Who did the work? His answer was: "Dr. Jenks of Detroit, a man that Dr. Ranney got to come out here for the purpose."

Very respectfully yours,

FRED. ZUFELT.

I would state that I have a number of other communications in my possession equally positive in their declarations to the above, but do not consider their reproduction necessary. As an illustration, however, of the methods resorted to by Dr. Ranney, in connection with the case in dispute, I beg leave to submit the following letter, which appeared in the *Grand Ledge Independent* under date of February 3rd, 1885:

“EDITOR INDEPENDENT:—In your issue of the 16th ult., you refer to the operation performed on my wife last October, and assume that Dr. Jenks, of Detroit, was the principal in the case, which is contrary to the understanding and observation of all present at the operation. I think that the person to whom you are indebted for information was not present, nor invited to be present at the operation. Had he been he might have discovered that Dr. Jenks was not in a ‘frame of mind’ to assume the responsibilities of the case, and his admiration for Dr. Jenks may have turned to pity.

E. TAYLOR.”

GRAND LEDGE, Mich., March 21st, 1885.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:—This is to certify that I believe that the above article, which appeared in my paper, of February 13th, 1885, over the signature of “E. Taylor,” was written by Dr. Ranney, of Lansing, and that the publication of the same was instigated by him. My reasons for so believing are that Mr. Taylor so informed me when he presented the article, and in conversation with me since has admitted as much.

(Signed)

W. C. WESTLAND,
Editor Grand Ledge Independent.

I very much regret the unseemly nature of the controversy which has arisen out of the above case, and rather than have taken part therein, would gladly have permitted Dr. Ranney to make all the local capital out of it, which seems to have been his ruling desire. A single ovariectomy neither makes nor un-makes a man's reputation in this branch of surgery, and I think I do not lay myself open to a charge of egotism in saying that it did not need this particular case to convince my brethren of the profession of Michigan and neighboring States of my competency to remove ovarian tumors, with at least an average degree of success as regards the recovery of the patients. Since 1868, not a year has passed in which I have not performed several ovariectomies, although I have not published reports of them all, whether successful or unsuccessful.

I should probably have remained silent in connection with this particular case but for the discrepancy between the notice in the *Medical Age* (which was essentially correct) and Dr. Ranney's report of it, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. This discrepancy, appearing on the heels of reports which were published (at whose instigation I can, of course, only infer) in the local papers of the section of the State in which the operation was performed, made it obligatory on me as a member of a profession which requires truth and honesty of its members, and simple justice between man and man, to do as I have essayed to do in my statement as above, and as corroborated by the certificates of reputable citizens. I should have been quite willing to report the operation conjointly with Dr. Ranney, but could not consent, at the expense of the unquestionable facts in the case, to be relegated to the position of a mere "assistant" by one who had never before, as I believe, attempted an ovariectomy, and had thus never demonstrated his ability to perform one.

EDWARD W. JENKS.

84 Lafayette Avenue,

Detroit, Mich., April 7, 1885.

